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## Attacking 'Social Science,' Rickover a Good One Himself

A SENATE hearing on social science research supported by the Department of Defense would not be expected to make lively reading. However, when the chief witness is Adm. Hyman G. Rickover, some salty prose is more likely to be in the offing.

His testimony at Sen. Fulbright's invitation before the Foreign Relations Committee, delivered May 28 and just published, fulfills every expectation. One suspects it may have needed censoring, but less for military security than for nicety of expression.

Adm. Rickover doesn't mince words. He blasts social science from stem to stern, inside the Defense Department and out. The worst monstrosity of social science, in his mind, is Secretary McNamara's legacy of cost-effectiveness.

"It is a classical example of the tendency of social science research to come up with axioms that lead to erroneous conclusions," he says. "Such axioms have already done enormous damage."

"We are coming to suspect age in the field of American that they are undermining the administration of justice in our country. I hope your committee will manage to keep them out of the conduct of American foreign relations. I have almost given

up hope that they can be eliminated from the control of military affairs."

PLAINLY, the Admiral's grievances with systems analysis, and therefore cost-effectiveness and "social science," stem from his long drawn out quarrels with the DOD about his program for nuclear submarines. Just what other axioms are wrong is not spelled out; his complaints may be validly directed against incompetent science, not the whole discipline. After all, the most articulate spokesman for the Oceanic System of strategic deterrence is the economist and father of game-theory, Oskar Morgenstern. Like any other decision making tool, cost effectiveness will make horrendous mistakes if spurious value judgments are fed into it.

Social science is, however, damned by Rickover on the fundamental argument that "you cannot predict what people will do." I hope that the Admiral is wrong about this. We have an overwhelming stake in verifying at least one prediction about human behavior: that our adversaries, no matter how angry, will be deterred from strategic attacks on us by their fear of retaliation from Adm. Rickover's submarines.

Our instruments for esti-

ating human responses are full of imperfections, by the standards of practical utility as well as the label "social science," and we had better keep a tempered skepticism about them. But we also had better develop them as best we can.

ACTUALLY, Adm. Rickover has earned what he might regard as an insulting epithet: his testimony shows him to be a very reputable social scientist himself. To try to discredit the think-tankers and their imputed logrolling in recommending each other's research projects, he advocates a systematic collection of information about the leading contractors, consultants and advisers, including their history of association with one another and with the Government.

"Then when you get a research recommendation from a panel, it should be easy to ascertain whether the recommendation may have been motivated by self-interest," he says.

Such a study would be fairly typical social science methodology, whatever else the Admiral prefers to call it. It is also vulnerable to many of his own criticisms, for patriotism and technical competence, as well as self-interest, may bind people to a common cause.